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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine the effect of repeated reading of taped literature on reading achievement of culturally different remedial students in the upper elementary grades. Twenty students were selected using a matched pairs design. The experimental treatment for ten students consisted of reading while listening to the tapes and the performing various comprehension activities. During the treatment period of 13 weeks, the experimental students spend approximately 15 minutes per day listening to the taped stories. After listening to the story two or three times, they were encouraged to read along orally as they listened. This was repeated until they were able to reread the story fluently. The comprehension, vocabulary, and accuracy scores were consistently higher for the experimental group than for the control group. However, the only significant difference existed for the comprehension scores. Observable changes in the affective behavior of experimental students indicated positive changes in the students' attitudes toward reading as well as changes in their self-concepts. Students who rarely read aloud prior to working with the taped stories frequently chose to read the stories to a different class as well as to the experimental group. (MKM)

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The Effect of Repeated Reading
of Taped Literature on Reading Achievement

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Culturally different students often come to the task of reading with sadly deficient backgrounds for understanding the complex relationship of language and printed material. Not only do they lack exposure to literature, but often their own language patterns bear little resemblance to the printed materials used in school reading programs.

Teaching these students to read becomes a laborious process. Skills are taught with heavy code emphasis, but time limitations often dictate neglect of proportionate exposure to printed material as well as practice in the use of the skills. Thus, the students are denied experiences which are essential for success in reading.

A method which compensates for time limitations and at the same time offers exposure to literature and practice in the use of skills involves the use of taped literature.

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A number of techniques for listening while reading have been developed and utilized, primarily with remedial students, during the last ten years. Serving as a foundation for these techniques are the Neurological Impress Method (Heckleman, 1969), which involves simultaneous reading by the student and teacher, and Assisted Reading (Hoskisson, 1975), in which the child is read to after which he repeats back the words, phrases, and sentences. Assisted Reading is based on the contention that children learn to read in a manner similar to that in which they learn to talk. Both methods focus on the relationship between reading and language.

The relevance of the two methods to the technique used in this study can best be demonstrated by taking a closer look at the complex skill of reading. Basically, reading requires utilization of information through the mastery of a series of visual, auditory, and cognitive skills and processes. The proper meshing of these skills and processes, along with adequate practice in using them, leads to one goal of reading instruction, which is reading fluency.

The stages of information processing are described by LaBerge and Samuels (1974) as related to their theory of automaticity and the acquisition of skills. Visual information is transformed through a series of processing stages involving the visual, phonological, and episodic memory systems until it is finally comprehended in the semantic system. The two criteria for evaluating the processing are: (a) accuracy and (b) automaticity.

Accuracy is demonstrated through word recognition, phrasing, observation of punctuation, and the absence of hesitations, repetitions, and omissions. Accuracy requires attention, thus, of necessity, it precedes automaticity.

Automaticity is attained when attention is no longer required for the

process of decoding from the visual to the semantic systems; it occurs automatically. When this happens, the reader is free to concentrate on the units of meaning indicating that fluent reading is occurring.

The importance of automaticity is emphasized by LaBerge and Samuels (1974).

"It is this capability of automatic processing which we consider critical for the successful operation of multi-component, complex skills such as reading. As visual words are processed through many stages en route meaningfulness, each stage is processed automatically. In addition, the transitions from stage to stage must be automatic as well. Sometimes a stage may begin processing before an earlier one finishes its processing." (p. 295).

Until decoding becomes automatic, it requires attention, and this creates a barrier to comprehension. Repeated readings aid in overcoming this barrier by providing the practice that is needed for the word recognition skills to become automatic. This, in turn, furthers the main purpose of repeated readings, which is building fluency (Samuels, 1979).

Three recent studies involving reading while listening have resulted in findings which appear to support this contention. In each of the studies, written material was taped and the students read along silently as they listened to the tape.

Schneeberg (1977) reported that her four-year study using reading while listening with educationally disadvantaged students in an inner-city school resulted in high gain scores. While expected gains in grade level ranged from 0.65 to 0.75, the students receiving the treatment showed gains of 1.0 and 1.2.

The technique was also used successfully with learning disabled children by Carbo (1978). She cited as an advantage the fact that the method requires the use of visual, aural, and tactile senses. An average gain of eight months in reading level was realized by her students after a

three-month treatment period. The gains ranged from four months to fifteen months.

Repeated readings of taped literature yielded positive results in the reading achievement of a group of third grade students who were reading one to two years below grade level (Chomsky, 1976). The students seemed unable to apply their decoding skills to the printed page and the method provided practice as the students "memorized" their stories to the point that they could read them well unassisted.

The method of listening while reading requires active participation on the part of the student, yet it allows reading to be an enjoyable, rather than frustrating activity. It provides a means of bridging the gap between the decoding and comprehension levels while at the same time providing practice in the integration of skills.

In addition to the positive effect the method has on reading achievement, a significant effect on attitude toward reading was observed. Schneeberg, Carbo, and Chomsky all found the materials to be highly motivational. The students experienced success in reading, a first for many of them, and the authors noted a welcome development of self-confidence among them along with a new-found enthusiasm for reading. This was especially important because the lack of motivation is often a significant problem with remedial readers.

The purpose of the study described in this paper was to determine the effect of repeated readings of taped literature on reading achievement of culturally different remedial students in the upper elementary grades.

It was hypothesized that there were no statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups (1) vocabulary, (2) comprehension, and (3) accuracy test scores when each is taken separately.

Twenty students from the fifth and sixth grades in a rural elementary school in Rockingham County, Virginia participated in the study. The experimental and control groups consisted of ten students each. Common characteristics of the students were that they were all reading from one and one-half years to two and one-half years below grade level and they were all participating in a Title I remedial reading supplementary program.

The Gilmore Oral Reading Test was selected as the pre-and post-test measure of accuracy. Reliability for the Gilmore is .94 at third grade and .84 at sixth grade. Reading achievement was measured using the vocabulary and comprehension subtests of the California Achievement Test. It has a total test reliability of .87.

The design used was a matched pairs design. The twenty subjects selected for the study were matched on the total reading scores from the California Achievement Test. The experimental treatment consisted of reading while listening to the tapes and the various comprehension activities. Both the experimental and control groups participated in the supplemental Title I program.

The data was analyzed using correlated t tests. An alpha of .05 was selected for testing statistical significance.

During the planning stages of the study, stories from a variety of sources were collected by the researchers according to two criteria. They were chosen to reflect the expressed and observed interests of the students in the experimental group. Secondly, appropriate and appealing literature was selected for the purpose of enriching the students' backgrounds.

The stories ranged in reading level from second to fifth grade. Material which was below the instructional levels of the students was taped for the initiation of the treatment period because many of the students

were unable to read even relatively easy material with expression. It was felt that beginning with material which allowed for ease in decoding would maximize the importance of expression.

Taping of the stories was done by the researcher with whom the students were not familiar. Since the students heard the teacher's voice on a daily basis for routine procedures, it was decided that an unfamiliar voice would be preferable.

For their first selection, the students were offered only the stories which were at their independent levels. Since they read with poor expression and usually did not observe punctuation, the material did present a challenge. The level also allowed for realization of success fairly quickly since the students' task, essentially, was to imitate a good model.

During the treatment period of thirteen weeks, the students spent approximately fifteen minutes per day listening to the taped stories. After listening to the story two or three times, they were encouraged to read along orally as they listened. This was repeated until they were able to read the story fluently.

When the students mastered a story, they were given the option of reading it to the teacher, the experimental group, their classroom reading group, or another class in the school. A surprisingly large number of them chose to read it first to the experimental group and then to a different class. It is noteworthy that these students rarely read aloud willingly prior to the treatment.

A number of activities were used as a supplement to the taped stories for the purpose of promoting and evaluating comprehension as well as creating an interaction between the printed material and the use of language. These included oral discussions, writing of sequences, questions,

descriptions, and comparisons, as well as creative writing.

Data analysis using a correlated t test revealed the following:

There was no significant difference for the vocabulary scores:

$t(9) = 1.45, p < .20$. The means were 14.3 and 13.5 for the experimental group and control group, respectively. Thus, the hypothesis of no significant differences for vocabulary was not rejected.

There was a significant difference for the comprehension scores:

$t(9) = 2.81, p > .05$. The means were 25.2 and 23.3 for the experimental group and control group, respectively. Thus, the hypothesis of no significant differences for comprehension was rejected.

There was no significant difference for the accuracy scores: $t(9) = 2.076, p < .10$. The means were 38.6 and 34.5 for the experimental and control group, respectively. Thus, the hypothesis of no significant differences for accuracy was not rejected.

The comprehension, vocabulary, and accuracy scores were consistently higher for the experimental group than the control group. While vocabulary and accuracy scores were not statistically significant, the authors contend they were educationally significant. Interpretation must be viewed with cautious optimism, however, since a number of other variables could have affected the scores. Among them are: teacher enthusiasm for the method, the motivational aspect of the use of tape players, and the comprehension activities used. In addition, some uncertainty persists as to whether a treatment period of such short duration could have had an effect on achievement scores.

A secondary aspect of the study dealt with the observable changes in the affective behavior of the students. A collection of anecdotal records compiled on a daily basis indicated positive changes in the students' attitudes toward reading as well as changes in their self-concepts as they

were perceived throughout the treatment period through informal observation.

Eight of the ten students utilized their free time two or three times during the week to return to the reading room for reading/listening sessions of fifteen to thirty minutes. Prior to the program, this did not occur. They enjoyed the stories, took pride in reading them well, and competed among themselves to read the most books.

Students from other Title I classes learned of the stories, and asked to listen to them. They became more productive in class so that they could finish their work early and be allowed to listen to the stories.

One sixth grade student was not included in the study because her frequent absences would have meant that her scores could not be compared on an equal basis with those of the other students. She was displeased, and soon started attending school regularly. As soon as she made up the work she had missed, she was allowed to participate in the program along with the other students, even though she wasn't included in the experimental group. She missed only a couple of days during the thirteen week period, although her normal attendance rate was about sixty percent.

The main difference in the technique for this study and that used in three previous studies which utilized taped materials was that the students were encouraged to read aloud while listening to the tapes. This produced some unexpected results. The students became totally absorbed in the stories, and a number of them spontaneously shouted, whined, growled, and cooed along with the reader. This total immersion in the reading material was partially facilitated by the design of the headphones, which was such that virtually all other sound was blocked out. It is speculated, however, that the primary reasons for the immersion were the appeal of the material itself and the manner in which it was recorded.

A classroom teacher came to the reading room while a reading/listening

session was in progress. She expressed dismay over the way one of her students was reading. The child, who happened to be highly distractible, not to mention self-conscious and shy, was reading "Beauty and the Beast." She was alternately growling, snapping, and snarling her way through Beast's words and cooing adoringly through Beauty's lines.

Another student frightened the class when he shouted at the top of his lungs, "A Greek! A Greek!" while reading "The Story of the Wooden Horse." The incident provided the perfect opportunity for discussing with the students that sometimes the best reading takes place when we become so involved with the printed material that we forget our surroundings. Automaticity was evident in the reading just described.

The self-confidence which emerged in the experimental students, as observed by the teacher, would appear to be directly attributable to the good model provided by the taped material and the repetition which allowed for mastery of the materials. They read with mirrored expression and took pride in sounding like the model. One student announced after listening to his tape for the first time: "I'm going to read just like him." Another boy who had always shied away from oral reading in front of a group was the first to volunteer to read to the experimental group. He read with excellent expression, and when he came to a quote from Franklin Delano Roosevelt, he lowered his voice and read the whole passage with presidential dignity.

In conclusion, the researchers believe that teachers need to be cognizant that many good readers seem to simply absorb the subskills, while remedial students may labor for years with difficulty. The good reader, because of success and the resultant love of reading, naturally pursues numerous opportunities for practicing reading skills. Practice leads to automaticity. The remedial student, on the other hand, tends to shy away

from practicing reading because of lack of success and frustration-- avoidance of reading becomes a habit. Thus, when some of the various subskills are eventually mastered, the remedial student continues to ignore reading as much as possible. Without practice, the experience of fluent reading is not enjoyed. The method of repeated reading while listening provides an appealing means of getting practice while furthering the goal of fluency.

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